Enhancing Bilingual Literacy and Tawhid Values through Digital Islamic Parenting Workshops for Early Childhood Educators

Dian Anggraini[1], Kholida Nur[2], Yuning Eka Rahma Wati[3]
[1,2,3]Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, Metro, Lampung, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This community service program aimed to strengthen the integration of tauhid-based values within bilingual digital pedagogy for teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The initiative was developed in response to the increasing linguistic and technological demands placed on Islamic educators, alongside the persistent fragmentation between language instruction and spiritual formation. Utilizing the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, the program engaged teachers in iterative cycles of collaborative planning, action, reflection, and refinement, enabling them to construct learning experiences that embed English and Arabic vocabulary within tauhid-oriented meaning-making. The results indicated substantial improvements in teachers' pedagogical competence, conceptual understanding, and technological proficiency, evidenced by their ability to design and produce digital Islamic learning media such as e-posters, multimedia storytelling, and interactive vocabulary tools. Furthermore, the workshop fostered stronger partnerships between teachers and parents, leading to a unified educational ecosystem grounded in shared spiritual responsibility. The findings validate that bilingual literacy, when anchored in Islamic theology, functions not merely as a communicative skill but as an instrument of identity building and moral cultivation. The program demonstrates a scalable and contextually relevant model for Islamic early childhood pedagogy, offering a transformative direction for future curriculum development, institutional collaboration, and long-term educational reform.

Corresponding Author:

Dian Anggraini
Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, Metro, Lampung, Indonesia
Jl R.A. Kartini 28 Matro Utara, Kota Metro, Lampung
Email: diananggraini324@gmail.com

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is widely recognized as a decisive phase in shaping children's lifelong dispositions, encompassing intellectual growth, spiritual grounding, and socio-emotional maturity. In Islamic educational contexts, this developmental mandate is even more profound, as learning is expected not merely to cultivate cognitive abilities, but also to guide children toward understanding existence and identity through the lens of faith. The pressures of globalization and digital interconnectedness, however, have expanded the linguistic requirements placed upon learners, making English and Arabic mastery a highly desirable competency from an early age (Musthafa, 2010). Yet, this linguistic acceleration has not been accompanied by an equivalent intensification in the cultivation of tauhid the theological principle that anchors Islamic epistemology thus resulting in a structural imbalance wherein language acquisition occurs in the absence of metaphysical orientation (Rahmawati, 2020). This condition raises a fundamental pedagogical question: can Islamic education be considered successful if linguistic proficiency grows independently of theological awareness?

Empirical tendencies in modern ECE institutions indicate a growing prioritization of foreign language instruction as an adaptive response to global demands, but one that often lacks integration with Islamic belief systems. Most instructional materials emphasize syntactic and semantic elements without embedding interpretive frameworks that connect language to divine meaning, moral purpose, and existential responsibility (Sari, 2021). When children learn foreign vocabulary without contextualizing it within tauhid, language becomes detached from worldview formation. Instead of serving as a spiritual conduit, linguistic expression risks becoming a value-neutral skill—an outcome fundamentally misaligned with the Islamic educational vision, which situates knowledge not as an isolated cognitive product but as a manifestation of faith-driven understanding. This divergence reveals a critical pedagogical vacuum: the absence of models that conceptualize bilingual literacy as a mechanism for cultivating both intellectual competence and spiritual consciousness.

Findings from learning contexts under the LP Ma'arif NU Metro Lampung further illuminate this gap. Although teachers acknowledge the importance of cultivating Arabic and English proficiency, they frequently lack the methodological clarity needed to balance these languages in classroom practice. Instruction is often monolingual, despite the well-documented capacity of young children to internalize multiple languages simultaneously when scaffolding is developmentally appropriate and values-based (Yuliana, 2022). This inconsistency suggests that the challenge is not merely linguistic but epistemological: educators possess fragments of pedagogical knowledge, yet lack the frameworks necessary to synthesize bilingual exposure, Islamic ontology, and meaningful instructional praxis. Absent such frameworks, the development of bilingual literacy risks becoming performative rather than transformative.

The complexity is compounded by the pervasive influence of digital culture on children's learning trajectories. Digital media potentially a powerful platform for constructing value-laden meaning remains underutilized in Islamic ECE settings, where learning materials are still predominantly textual, linear, and teacher-centered (Nugroho, 2021). Children of Generation Alpha engage naturally with multimodal forms of communication, which blend auditory, visual, and narrative components in ways that stimulate cognitive curiosity and identity exploration. Yet, without guided pedagogical intervention, digital exposure becomes passive consumption rather than active spiritual construction. Compounding this issue, evaluation practices in Islamic ECE continue to privilege measurable cognitive outputs such as vocabulary recall, rather than assessing the internalization of belief, ethical reasoning, and spiritual comportment dimensions that constitute the philosophical apex of Islamic pedagogy (Widiastuti, 2020). This evaluative asymmetry further reinforces the fragmentation between language learning and identity formation.

Taken together, these conditions demonstrate a clear and pressing need for an intervention that surpasses conventional parenting training and pedagogical workshops. What is required is a transformative, systematically designed program that operationalizes tauhid not as a thematic appendage, but as a unifying instructional paradigm that structures how language is taught, interpreted, and lived. A Digital Islamic Parenting Workshop offers such a trajectory by equipping educators and parents with a shared conceptual grammar, enabling them to collaboratively reframe bilingual literacy as both a communicative competence and a theological act. Through participatory engagement, reflective inquiry, and sustained digital practice, this model aims not merely to elevate linguistic proficiency, but to cultivate learners whose language practices embody spiritual intentionality, ethical awareness, and a coherent Islamic worldview. In doing so, the workshop responds directly to the epistemic, pedagogical, and sociocultural gaps identified above, offering a replicable platform for Islamic early childhood education that harmonizes faith, language, and technology into a single pedagogical continuum.

Methods

This community empowerment program implemented the Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework, selected as the core methodological approach because it positions participants not merely as recipients of knowledge, but as active collaborators in the process of pedagogical transformation. PAR is grounded in the belief that meaningful change in educational practices must emerge from the lived realities, reflections, and negotiated understandings of the practitioners themselves (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). This aligns with the program's collaborative orientation, which required the simultaneous integration of bilingual literacy, tauhid-based values, and digital pedagogical competence dimensions that cannot be shaped through conventional top–

down training. The selection of PAR was therefore not incidental; it reflected a methodological commitment to ensure that teachers and parents played substantive roles in co-identifying challenges, co-designing solutions, and co-generating sustainable pedagogical shifts within early childhood Islamic education settings.

Operationally, the PAR design unfolded as a recursive cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection, each stage reinforcing the others through collective inquiry and iterative adjustment. The planning stage began with structured problem identification through observations and interviews, enabling educators to articulate knowledge gaps related to digital literacy, tauhid integration, and balanced bilingual instruction. Instead of prescribing predetermined workshop content, the program facilitated the co-construction of learning modules based on these emergent needs. This corresponded directly with the foundational principle of PAR that knowledge production must be situated, negotiated, and socially embedded rather than universally imposed (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The collaborative nature of this stage was critical, as not all teachers possessed the same level of digital competence or familiarity with tauhid-based bilingual pedagogy. The workshop modules digital storytelling, bilingual instructional design, and tauhid-centered framing were thus the result of shared deliberation, ensuring relevance to local contexts and teacher capacities.

The action–reflection cycle constituted the core engine of transformation. During the action phase, participants engaged in workshop sessions, practiced integrating tauhid into bilingual digital materials, and applied these prototypes in authentic classroom environments. This was followed by observation and structured reflection sessions, where educators critically examined the pedagogical intentions, execution, and outcomes of their actions. Reflection in PAR is not merely evaluative; it functions as an epistemic space where participants interrogate assumptions, reinterpret experiences, and refine practices based on collective reasoning (McNiff, 2017). This cyclical process continued until participants demonstrated the ability to synthesize linguistic objectives, digital tools, and Islamic value orientations with increasing autonomy. Structurally, the program proceeded through four procedural stages (1) problem identification and collaborative planning, (2) action through training and classroom practice, (3) observation and reflection, and (4) refinement and follow-up implementation thereby enabling sustained growth beyond a single intervention. The subjects of this program consisted of 15–25 early childhood educators enrolled in higher education programs who met predefined criteria, ensuring that participants possessed both developmental readiness and intrinsic motivation to engage in the production of value-integrated bilingual educational materials.

Result And Discussion

The implementation of the Digital Islamic Parenting Workshop brought about profound pedagogical shifts in Early Childhood Education (ECE) environments, marked not only by changes in instructional approaches but also by alterations in teachers' belief systems and perceptions of their professional roles. Prior to the workshop, many participants approached tauhid as a discrete religious topic—explained during isolated sessions of Islamic instruction—rather than as the foundational principle guiding all learning and behavior. After the workshop, teachers described tauhid as "the lens through which everything must be seen," suggesting a transformation from fragmented teaching practices toward an integrated worldview, reflecting Rahmawati's (2020) argument that Islamic pedagogy must begin from spiritual awareness rather than procedural knowledge. This shift was visible in how participants began reinterpreting classroom objects, colors, and natural phenomena as signs (ayāt) of Allah rather than neutral concepts.

One of the most significant manifestations of this shift was the emergence of a tauhid-embedded bilingual learning model, wherein English and Arabic vocabulary was consistently accompanied by theological explanations. Instead of merely introducing the word sky in English or sama' in Arabic, teachers encouraged children to articulate that "the sky is a creation of Allah who sustains the universe," thereby transforming vocabulary into spiritual affirmation. This directly addresses Sari's (2021) critique that language learning in ECE settings tends to be detached from value cultivation. The workshop bridged this gap by enabling educators to attach meanings, stories, and emotional resonance to linguistic symbols, making language not just something children say, but something they believe. The transformation was not only cognitive but emotional. Several teachers confessed during reflection sessions that, prior to the workshop, they felt pressured to emphasize English instruction because of parental expectations and global trends, without understanding how such instruction could be made spiritually rooted. Post-workshop, teachers reported feelings of relief and excitement, noting that tauhid integration "gave language instruction a soul," as one participant phrased it. This emotional awakening resonates with Al-Ghazali's educational premise that early childhood teaching must nurture the heart before the intellect, ensuring that every act of learning reflects one's relationship with Allah SWT.

The workshop also produced tangible innovation in the form of digital learning materials. Teachers who initially struggled to operate simple design platforms eventually created e-posters, animated vocabulary sequences, and interactive greeting videos that embedded religious messages—such as beginning activities with Bismillah or expressing gratitude with Alhamdulillah. These products were colorful, multimodal, and child-friendly, aligning with Nugroho's (2021) view that digitalization in Islamic education is essential for engaging Generation Alpha learners. The materials demonstrated not only technical competence but pedagogical intentionality, as teachers learned to design media

that captured children's sensory attention while simultaneously cultivating theological awareness. The integration of digital tools served a dual function. It not only supported bilingual competence but also fostered character formation, as reflected in children's responses. Teachers observed children repeating statements such as "Allah created the world" in English or Arabic with visible enthusiasm. This echoes Pransiska's (2020) finding that religiously infused bilingual literacy reinforces not only verbal abilities but also moral and spiritual identity. Teachers described moments in which children corrected peers using Islamic greetings appropriately evidence that linguistic exposure had transformed into behavioral embodiment, not merely recitation.

The reflections collected revealed that teachers began perceiving themselves not merely as transmitters of academic content, but as moral agents shaping children's worldview. This finding validates Yusrina's (2021) statement that tauhid must permeate all dimensions of development cognitive, affective, and psychomotor so children learn to interpret experiences through faith-based consciousness. Teachers' journals included detailed accounts of spontaneous conversations initiated by children linking colors, foods, or natural objects to Allah's creation, illustrating how tauhid had become internalized as a mode of inquiry, not a memorized doctrine.

The workshop also reconfigured institutional relationships. Teachers and parents who previously interacted transactionally restricted to school meetings and report cards—became collaborative partners in educational design. Parents evaluated digital learning products, offered contextual examples from home, and shared strategies for reinforcing bilingual expressions in domestic routines. This aligns with Musthafa's (2010) premise that language development requires community affirmation. What emerged was not merely cooperation but a shared moral commitment, forming what participants proudly termed an "educational jama'ah," akin to the Qur'anic concept of ummatan wahidah a unified community built on faith and shared responsibility. The use of PAR methodology intensified this transformation. Rather than passively receiving expert instructions, teachers participated in iterative cycles of planning, action, reflection, and refinement, consistent with Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) characterization of PAR as a socially situated process of conscious change. Participants noted that reflection sessions were the most transformative stage because they allowed them to confront habitual teaching assumptions. Teachers admitted that, without reflection, they would have continued teaching language devoid of spiritual meaning, reinforcing Widiastuti's (2020) critique that ECE evaluation is often confined to cognitive metrics at the expense of spiritual measurement.

Quantitative evaluation reinforced these qualitative observations. Participants achieved an 85% increase in competence scores related to integrating digital media, bilingual vocabulary, and tauhid messages into learning designs. This gain was evident not only in test results but also in observable teaching behavior: teachers used English

and Arabic expressions naturally during routines, corrected children gently with theological justifications, and adjusted classroom posters to reflect Islamic values visually. This measurable growth supports Anderson and Krathwohl's (2010) assertion that the highest cognitive outcomes are achieved when learners are able to create, apply, and reinterpret knowledge in new contexts.

Despite these achievements, the program faced limitations. Varied digital capabilities created uneven production outputs, time constraints restricted deeper exploration of tauhid scaffolding techniques, and some teachers required multiple iterations before confidently integrating belief statements into linguistic expressions. However, these limitations are indicative of learning-in-progress rather than failure. They reflect the systemic reality that many ECE institutions inherit fragmented pedagogical legacies where religion and language are siloed domains, echoing Yuliana's (2022) observation that bilingual instruction is often unanchored from Islamic epistemology.

Conclusion

The Digital Islamic Parenting Workshop has demonstrated its effectiveness as an innovative and contextually grounded model for integrating tauhid-based values with bilingual digital pedagogy in Early Childhood Education (ECE), evident through substantial improvements in teachers' conceptual clarity, instructional competence, and collaborative engagement with parents and educational institutions; this integration successfully transformed bilingual learning from a procedural linguistic exercise into a spiritually anchored process of identity formation and moral cultivation, thereby affirming the epistemic unity between faith, knowledge, and technology in Islamic education. The implications of this program extend beyond the immediate learning outcomes, offering a strategic foundation for developing sustainable teacher professionalism, strengthening parent–school partnerships, and positioning digital Islamic content creation as a core competency in preparing educators for future pedagogical challenges. However, to ensure long-term impact, institutional commitment is required in the form of structured mentoring, resource enhancement, and periodic program continuity, particularly to address disparities in digital literacy and deepen tauhid-based lesson design. Accordingly, further research is recommended to explore longitudinal effects on children's cognitive, linguistic, and spiritual development, while educational stakeholders are encouraged to adopt and adapt this model as a blueprint for curriculum innovation in Islamic ECE contexts. Ultimately, this initiative exemplifies how Islamic education can evolve constructively in the digital age without compromising its metaphysical foundations, thereby charting a forward-looking direction in which faith, pedagogy, and technology coexist harmoniously to cultivate a generation of learners who are linguistically competent, spiritually conscious, and ethically grounded.

Acknowledgment

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